

Appl. No.: 09/700,687  
Amdt. dated September 24, 2004  
Reply to Office action of August 10, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A mutant strain of *L. bulgaricus* lacking  $\beta$ -galactosidase activity which carries a non-sense mutation in at least one of the coding sequences of the lactose operon, wherein said coding sequence is the sequence encoding  $\beta$ -galactosidase.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) A mutant strain of *L. bulgaricus* which was deposited on January 14, 1998 with the CNCM under the number I-1968, said strain lacking  $\beta$ -galactosidase activity and carrying a non-sense mutation in at least one of the coding sequences of the lactose operon.

4. (Previously Presented) A lactic ferment, which comprises at least one strain of *L. bulgaricus* as claimed in claim 1.

5. (Previously Presented) The lactic ferment as claimed in claim 4, wherein said strain of *L. bulgaricus* is combined with at least one strain of *S. thermophilus*.

6. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a fermented dairy product, which comprises a step during which milk is fermented using a lactic ferment comprising at least one strain of *L. bulgaricus* as claimed in claim 1, in the presence of at least one sugar which can be assimilated by said strain.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said sugar which can be assimilated is glucose.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the arrest of fermentation is carried out without cooling of said dairy product.

9. (Previously Presented) A fermented dairy product obtained using a method as claimed in claim 6.

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10. (Previously Presented) The fermented dairy product as claimed in claim 9, wherein said product is a yogurt.
11. (Previously Presented) A mutant strain of *L. bulgaricus* deposited on January 14, 1998 with the CNCM under the number I-1968.
12. (Previously Presented) A lactic ferment which comprises at least one strain of *L. bulgaricus* as claimed in claim 11.
13. (Previously Presented) The lactic ferment as claimed in claim 12, wherein said strain of *L. bulgaricus* is combined with at least one strain of *S. thermophilus*.
14. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a fermented dairy product, which comprises a step wherein milk is fermented using a lactic ferment comprising at least one strain of *L. bulgaricus* as claimed in claim 11, in the presence of at least one sugar which can be assimilated by said strain.
15. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein said sugar which can be assimilated is glucose.
16. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 14, wherein the arrest of fermentation is carried out without cooling of said dairy product.
17. (Previously Presented) A fermented dairy product obtained by the method as claimed in claim 14.
18. (Previously Presented) The fermented dairy product as claimed in Claim 17 wherein said product is a yogurt.